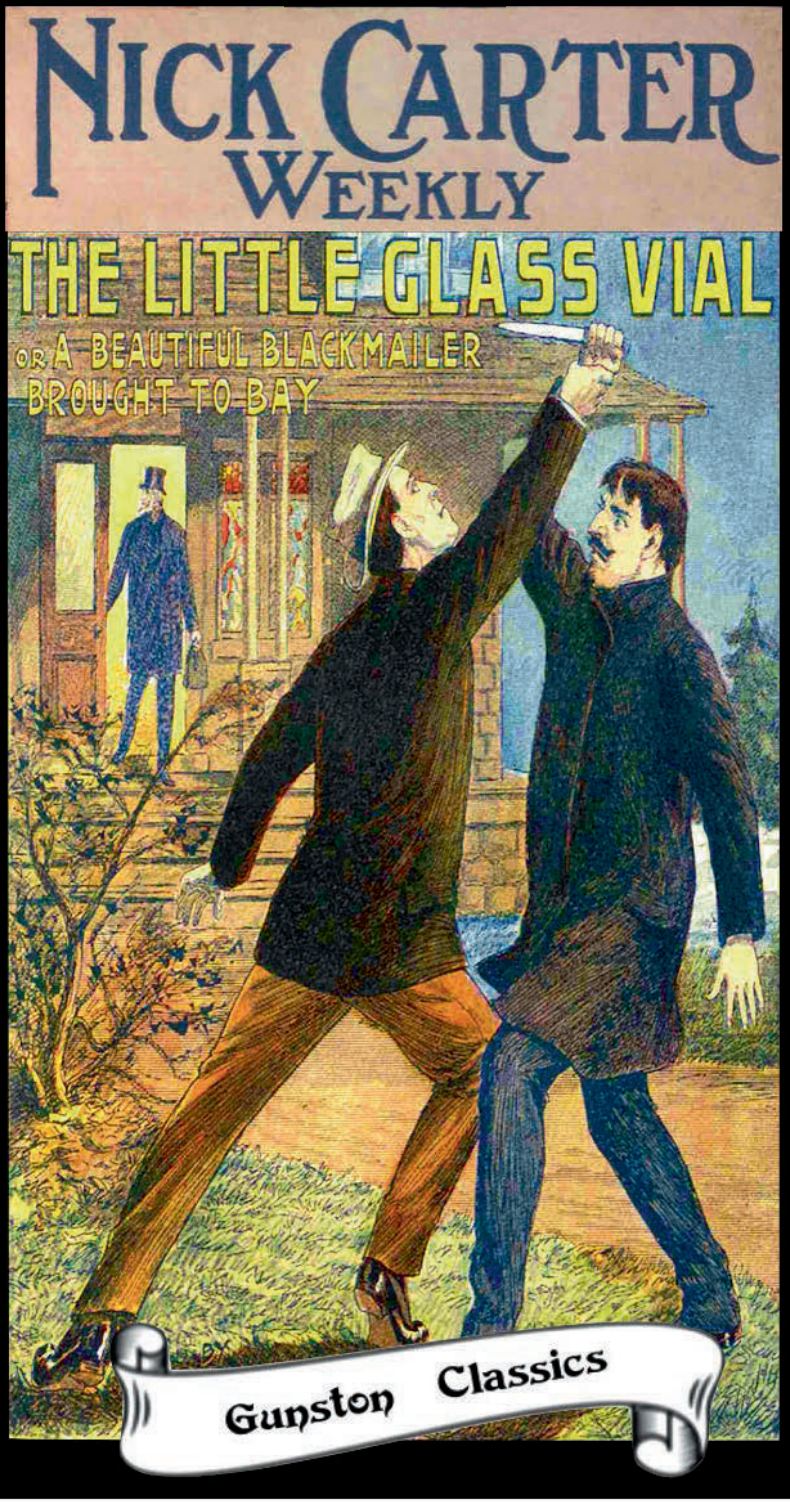
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY
THE LITTLE GLASS VIAL
OR A BEAUTIFUL BLACKMAILER BROUGHT TO BAY
Gunston Classics

No. 197

The Little Glass Vial

or
A Beautiful Blackmailer Brought to Bay

Author: Nicholas Carter

1897

Lyons Head Publishing

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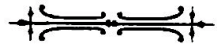
Detective - Nick Carter

The Little Glass Vial



CHAPTER I.

THE VIAL IN THE SNOW.

"Well, old man," said Nick Carter, as he shook the snow from his overcoat, "what's the news? Anything strange since this morning?"

He was addressing Chick, his assistant, who, to use his own expression, was "acting the chamber lawyer" for the day.

"Yes. Two small cases have come in; but there is a telegram from Boston that may be of importance."

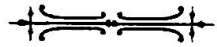
"Let's see it, my lad!" said the great detective, throwing his overcoat on a chair and seating himself. He took the dispatch in his hands and read it slowly.

"H'm! Yes, there's something in this, Chick. What time is it?"

"Five-forty."

"Good! I can catch the Providence boat. Telegraph anything you have to say to the Adams House!" and in another moment the noted detective had left the office.

The snow lay heavy upon the ground when Nick Carter arrived in Boston next morning. Nothing eventful happened during his journey, and he felt rested and ripe for his work—whatever it was.



He was about to step into a cab, when his eyes caught sight of a small vial, half buried in the snow, which he picked up and placed in one of his overcoat pockets, then addressing the hackman, he said:

"When did the snow stop falling?"

"Just after the train for New York pulled out last night, sir."

"You had a heavy fall?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know where Mr. Samuel Rogers lives in Dorchester?"

"Of course I do, sir."

"Well, take me there."

Half an hour later the cab stopped at an old-fashioned mansion, which stood in a beautifully kept lawn, in the most fashionable part of Dorchester.

"I wish to see Mr. Samuel Rogers, junior," said the detective to the colored man who answered his ring.

"What name shall I say?" asked the domestic.

"Oh, never mind the name. Tell him that a friend from New York wishes to see him."

A few minutes afterward a good-looking young fellow entered the room.

"Mr. Rogers, I presume?" said Nick.

"Yes, sir. That is my name."

"I received a telegram from you yesterday," rejoined Nick Carter.

"Oh!" said Rogers. "You are Mr. Nick Carter?"

"Yes."

"Won't you be seated?" continued the young man. "I wished to see you upon a very sad and mysterious matter."

The detective watched him keenly as he spoke; but did not interrupt.

"My father lies dead in the next room. The doctors say he died of heart disease, but I have a different opinion."

"Ah!" sighed Nick. "And what may your opinion be, Mr. Rogers?"

"I believe he was murdered."

"Murdered?"

"Yes."

"Upon what do you base this suspicion?"

"This letter," said Rogers, handing the detective an envelope, which bore the Boston postmark of the previous day.

Nick opened it and read as follows:

"Mr. Rogers: Your father did not die of heart disease. He was murdered. Have the body thoroughly examined before burial.

You will find that the murderer is nearer home than you imagine.

"One Who Knows."

Nick looked from the letter to Rogers' face.

In a searching glance, he seemed to learn what he wanted.

"You wish me to unravel this mystery?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Rogers.

The detective placed the letter in his pocket and said:

"Have you had a private examination of your father's body?"

"No, sir. I waited until I had consulted with you."

"You did quite right," said Nick, "and now, Mr. Rogers, will you be good enough to let me see your father's remains?"

The only watcher in the death chamber was the colored man who had admitted Nick Carter.

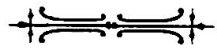
Nick looked at the corpse and noticed that the face had a peculiar grayish hue.

Turning to Rogers, he said:

"Was the body embalmed?"

"No, sir. Dr. Lord wished to have it embalmed yesterday; but I objected."

"Why did you object?" asked Carter, narrowly watching his companion's face.



"That letter," said Rogers; but before making any further explanation, he ordered Jones—the colored man—to leave the room.

"What about the letter?" inquired Nick, when Jones had gone.

"I received it by the afternoon mail, just before the doctor made his examination. I then telegraphed to you, and decided that, until you arrived, I would not allow any interference with the body."

"Was the coroner notified?" asked Nick.

"No, sir. Dr. Lord has given a certificate of death from heart disease."

Just then the servant summoned young Rogers to receive a visitor.

The moment he was gone Nick took a hasty inventory of the surroundings.

As the young fellow had said, it was quite apparent that nothing in the room had been disturbed since the old man died.

During his examination of the body his hand touched something with a sharp point.

It lay within the folds of the coat, and Nick made an exclamation of surprise when he discovered that it was a lady’s hat-pin, with a curious haliotis shell head. This he put in his pocket.

He had almost finished his examination of the body, rearranged the clothing, and was just placing the hands in the position in which he found them, when his keen eye detected a slight discoloration of the left wrist.

Upon close examination, he discovered a very small wound—almost a pin-hole.

An almost imperceptible discoloration extended from this wound up along the wrist.

In a moment Nick produced a small surgical pincers and drew from the little wound a needle-like piece of silver.

It was the point of a hypodermic syringe.

This he stowed away with the hat-pin.

A few moments afterward young Rogers made his appearance.

"There is a mystery here," said Nick.

"What have you learned?"

"That I cannot tell even you, sir—at least not yet. But I shall have to ask you a few questions. Remember, if you do not answer them truthfully, or if you keep back any information concerning this matter, I shall not be responsible for the consequences."

"Mr. Carter," cried Rogers, "what do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. You must trust me with all your secrets, if I require to know them. Otherwise, you will never know how your father died."

The young man became pale and flushed in turn. He seemed to be suffering from intense mental disturbance.

But, at last, he regained his composure, and said:

"I shall not conceal anything from you, Mr. Carter. But," he falteringly continued, "publicity must only be given to those matters that directly concern my father's death."

"Good!" said Nick. "And now, Mr. Rogers, let us be seated; for I have much to learn from you. Had your father ever suffered from any complaint that would need hypodermic injections?"

Rogers looked at him in amazement and answered:

"Yes. He complained of neuralgic rheumatism for some years."

"And sought relief by injections of morphine, no doubt."

"Yes, sir. Dr. Lord prescribed it."

"Are you quite sure that he used only morphine?"

"Certain."

"Did he use the hypodermic syringe himself?" asked Nick.

"No, sir."

"Who gave him the injections?"

"Dr. Lord."

"Was Dr. Lord here on the evening preceding his death?"

"Yes; he had dinner here that evening."

"Then he is a friend of the family?"

"Yes, sir. He is engaged to be married to my sister."

Nick's face brightened; but he pretended not to notice the announcement which young Rogers had just made.

Continuing, he said:

"When did Dr. Lord leave here that evening?"

"Shortly after dinner. He had an urgent call to a patient at Roxbury."

"And your father retired shortly after?"

"No; he did not go to his room until ten o'clock."

"When did you discover that he was dead?"

"When Jones went to bring him his chocolate, at seven o'clock yesterday morning."

"What happened then?"

"We sent for Dr. Lord, who examined him and pronounced it heart disease. He went away then, and returned shortly afterward with another doctor."

"Did the strange doctor agree with Dr. Lord?"

"Yes. Dr. White also said heart disease."

"Who was in the house besides your father, sister, the colored man, and yourself after Dr. Lord went away?"

Rogers became nervous, which fact Nick immediately noticed.

The young man replied:

"My sister was not here. She is in Philadelphia."

"Does she know of your father's death?"

"Yes. But my uncle has prevailed upon her not to return just now."

"Is your uncle coming to the funeral?"

"Yes; he will be here this afternoon."

"You have not told me," said Nick, "who was in the house the night before last after Dr. Lord went away."

Rogers became disconcerted again; but he replied:

"My father, Jones, the cook, chamber-maid, and myself."

"You are sure there was no one else?"

The young fellow again faltered and became very pale. And then, with an effort, he replied:

"Yes; I am quite certain of it."

"When was the marriage of your sister to Dr. Lord to have taken place?" asked Carter.

Rogers breathed freely again as he answered:

"Father wanted it to take place next month."

"And was it fixed for that date?"

"Well, no," hesitatingly.

"Was there some barrier?"

"The fact is, Mr. Carter, I am also engaged to be married, and my sister and I decided to have the two events come off together."

"A capital idea!" said Nick. "But why couldn’t you have arranged it so?"

"Well, we—that is, I hadn’t fixed upon any particular time. Miss Bland and I are not in a hurry, you know."

"And your sister? Was she anxious for her wedding day?"

"Not exactly," hurriedly cried Rogers. "She is not head over heels in love with Lord; but father was anxious for the match."

"And how does the doctor feel about it?"

"Oh, he is very ardent in his suit."

"I see," mused Nick. "Tell me," he continued, "did your father make a will?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know its contents?"

"Yes."

"What are the provisions?"

"It is very simple, but a little curious."

"In what way is it curious?"

"It stipulates that his entire property is to be divided equally between Aimee and me, upon certain conditions. The estate is valued at about three hundred thousand dollars, and the only strange condition of the will is that, in the event of his death before Aimee's marriage with Dr. Lord she is to get one-half of his entire estate if she marries him within six months of his, my father's, decease. But that, in the event of this marriage not taking place within that time she is only to receive the interest upon twenty thousand dollars for life."

"And what becomes of the balance?"

"It reverts to me absolutely."

"Does Dr. Lord know the provisions of your father's will?"

"Yes, sir. He has seen it."

"Does he know that you telegraphed for me?"

"No."

"Very well. Now, I shall have to leave you," said Nick; "but I shall probably return in the afternoon. In the meantime do not disclose my presence or identity to anybody."

And as he moved toward the door, he added:

"I think you might send for the undertaker, and have the body placed in the coffin at once."

Nick immediately walked in the direction of the telegraph office.

Having arrived there, he sent the following telegram in usual cipher:

"Mrs. Nicholas Carter, New York City: Send Ida to Philadelphia immediately. Tell her to stop at usual hotel. I will telegraph her instructions this evening."

From here he walked slowly toward the cars, and was just about to board one bound for Boston, when he stopped and said:

"I must see that doctor."

He retraced his steps and entered the nearest drug store.

"Can you tell me where Dr. Lord lives?" he inquired from the clerk.

"Certainly, sir. Straight up the road opposite. I forget the number; but you cannot make a mistake, for you will see a brass plate, with his name, on the garden gate."

"Thank you," said Nick. "But perhaps that is not the Dr. Lord I want."

"It must be," said the clerk, laughing, "for he is the only Lord in Dorchester."

A few minutes afterward Nick Carter was ushered into the reception-room of Mr. Rogers' physician.

Apparently the reception-room was also used as a kind of auxiliary surgery; for, upon a table, were a number of surgical instruments of various kinds.

Nick noticed this with satisfaction, and he moved over toward the table in order to more closely inspect the contents.

Just then the servant entered the room and announced that the doctor would be disengaged in a few minutes.

"You're in luck, Nick!" muttered the detective, as he forthwith proceeded to inspect the surgical instruments. There were forceps, and lancets, and clinical thermometers by the dozen; but what attracted Nick's eye were four hypodermic syringe cases.

He opened them one after another, and when he got to the last —which was smaller than the others—he held it in his hand only for a moment; then opening the case, he found a small syringe from which the pointer needle had been broken off at the base.

Taking from his pocket the point which he had removed from Mr. Rogers' wrist, he was not surprised to find that it fitted exactly.

He quickly replaced the broken syringe in its case and resumed his seat.

Shortly after a tall, dark, good-looking man entered the room.

Nick recognized him from a photograph he had seen at Rogers'.

"Dr. Lord, I presume," he remarked.

"Yes, sir. What can I do for you?" said the medical gentleman, with a pleasant voice.

"Have you any surgical instruments to be repaired?" said Nick.

"No, sir," politely replied the doctor. "When surgical instruments need repairing it is generally time to get new ones. I am sorry I have nothing in your line to-day."

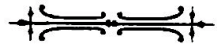
As he said this he was very courteously opening the door for his visitor; but Nick was not so easily dismissed.

"You will excuse me, sir," he said, "but while I was waiting I took the liberty of looking over your instruments yonder. They are beautiful tools; but I noticed that a remarkably fine hypodermic syringe has the point broken off."

"By the way," said the doctor, interrupting him, "I wish I knew where that came from. It isn't mine. It is of a very curious pattern, too."

"Yes, doctor," said Nick, "it is a curious little syringe. But it is remarkable that it could have found its way here without your knowledge."

The doctor did not quite like this remark. He showed it in his face, which Nick was intently watching.



"I would like to buy it from you," said the pretended surgical instrument maker, not noticing the doctor's look of impatience.

"Oh," said the latter, "it is not mine to sell. I found it upon my table yesterday evening, and I cannot possibly trace an ownership for it among my callers."

"It is of Spanish make," said Nick, who was carefully examining it.

But this did not enlighten Dr. Lord. He was beginning to tire of the pertinacity of his visitor, and finally, to get rid of him, he said:

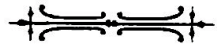
"Well, you can take it away with you. It is useless to me, and as it is also useless to whoever left it here, I dare say they won't return for it."

Nick was profuse in his thanks, and was hurrying toward Boston in a very few moments.

He had noticed that the graduated cylinder of the syringe contained a small quantity of some kind of liquid, and he determined to have it analyzed.

At the same time he remembered the small vial which he had found in the snow, at the Providence depot; and, upon his arrival at the city analyst's, he handed that gentleman the two articles.

He gave him his card, and the moment the analyst recognized the name of the great New York detective he became particularly attentive, and after a careful examination, he



pronounced the contents of the syringe to be the same as the vial, and a deadly poison it was.

"Supposing some of it was injected into a man’s wrist, what would happen?" said Nick.

"Happen? Why, the man would be dead in ten second or less. This is a South American poison, Mr. Carter. It is, perhaps, the most deadly in existence, and the peculiar thing about it is the fact that in doing its work in the human system, it so quickly assimilates with the blood that it is next to impossible to trace it. Another strange thing about it is that it acts directly upon the heart, and in such a manner that the most experienced physician will imagine the victim died from heart disease."

Nick thanked the analyst, and went at once to the Adams House for letters and telegrams from Chick. The coincidence of the fluids contained in the hypodermic syringe and in the vial, which he picked up in the snow at the Providence depot, being the same was remarkable, and, as he walked along, he mused:

"One hundred and fifty thousand dollars and a pretty girl is a big stake to lose, Dr. Lord. But it wasn’t a man of science who placed that syringe point in man’s wrist!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CUBAN GIRL.

When Nick had attended to Chick's messages he sent a long letter to Ida, in which he instructed her to find out the private address of James Rogers; to go there; try to ascertain whether or not Aimee Rogers really loved Dr. Lord, and to telegraph to him the moment she got the required information.

Darkness was now setting in, and Nick Carter strolled along Washington street. As he went by the passage that leads to Parke's restaurant, he decided to take his dinner there, and accordingly, five minutes later, he was seated at a corner table, waiting for his order.

At a large table, close to him, four fashionably dressed young men were dining. The dishes had all been removed, and they were now enjoying their cigars over some black coffee and brandy.

Nick Carter soon disposed of the plain course which he had ordered, and was about to leave the restaurant when he heard one of the young fellows say:

"Sad about Sam Rogers' governor, wasn't it?"

"Waiter! Bring me a cup of coffee!" said Nick.

He then took a newspaper from his pocket and pretended to read it.

While listening attentively to the conversation of the four young fellows, he heard one of them say:

"I dare say old Rogers' death will postpone Sam's marriage with Miss Bland."

"I shouldn't be surprised," said another.

"Lucky dog," said the first speaker. "They say that Lucy Bland is worth fully half a million."

"At least," rejoined his friend. "But look here, Porter, when did you see Sam's other girl, the olive-tinted loved one? That girl will give him some trouble, if he is not more careful."

"See her? My dear fellow, I saw her last night."

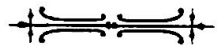
"Where?"

"At the Providence depot, just as the snow stopped falling."

Nick Carter took a deep drink of his coffee and listened very intently now.

"What was she doing?" asked one of the speakers. "Going to New York?"

"Precisely. I bowed to her and asked if I could be of any service. She simply asked me the best hotel to stop at in Providence. I told her, and said, 'You are surely not going to stop at that awful hole.'"



"You have cheek," interrupted one of the diners.

"Oh, you be blowed!" said the gentleman named Porter. "The girl laughed at the idea of remaining in Providence. She said that she merely intended stopping there for the night, and that she was going to New York by the nine o'clock boat to-day."

"If Rogers hears that you are interesting yourself in that girl, Porter, it will be pistols and coffee for two. By the way, what's the divinity's name?"

"Alvarez. I think she is a Cuban, or South American, or something of that kind."

Nick didn't wait to hear any more.

He hurriedly paid his bill and left the restaurant.

It was now five o'clock.

"I have just time to notify Chick," he said.

In two minutes he was at the telegraph office, in the Parker House, writing the following dispatch to his faithful assistant:

"Meet boat left Providence nine o'clock this morning. Observe handsome Cuban lady named Alvarez. Keep her within distance until you hear from me.

"Nick."

He then returned to his hotel and wrote a letter to Chick, directing him to shadow his woman, find out all about her, and, if possible, discover what her business was.

Half an hour later he rang the bell at the Rogers mansion.

The door was opened by young Rogers in person, who led the way to the parlor.

"Is Dr. Lord here?" asked Nick, before the young man could say a word.

"Yes. He is with my uncle, who has also arrived."

"Well, he mustn't see me. He might recognize me if we keep talking here."

"Recognize you?" said Rogers, when he had conducted Nick to his own bed chamber. "What do you mean, Mr. Carter? Does he know you?"

"I don't think so; but, you know, doctors and detectives often meet under peculiar circumstances."

Rogers gave him a puzzled look.

He clearly did not understand Nick Carter's ways.

And Nick clearly determined that he should not.

As they proceeded to another room, Nick asked:

"When did you see the woman Alvarez last?"

"Mr. Carter!" cried Rogers, turning deathly pale, "where on earth did you learn anything about her?"

"I have many channels from which to gather my information," said Nick, coolly. "But you have not answered my question. When did you see her last?"

"The evening before my father died."

"Was she in the house after Dr. Lord went away?"

"In the name of goodness, what have you learned?" asked Rogers, in apparent terror.

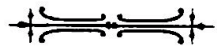
"A good deal about your relations with her, my dear young sir," said Nick, who was narrowly watching the perturbation of his companion.

The young fellow’s eyes twitched nervously; he was trembling, Nick saw plainly.

He altered his tactics, and said:

"Look here, Mr. Rogers, you told me this morning that you would conceal nothing from me. Do you think you are treating me fairly?"

"Well," said the young fellow, who was crushed from amazement more than anything else, "I shall make a clean breast of it."



CHAPTER III.

"ANOTHER CUBAN."

"What I am about to disclose to you, you will promise to keep as secret as the grave?"

"I make no promise and must use my own judgment," replied Nick.

"Well, then, the woman whom you call Alvarez is my wife."

"Your wife?" said Nick, with real surprise.

"Unhappily, it is so."

"I thought you said you were engaged to be married to Miss Bland?" interjected Nick.

"Yes, sir. But I shall have to explain everything to you. When I was in Florida last winter I met her. She was very beautiful, and threw herself in my way. I became infatuated, and one night, while slightly intoxicated, I consented to marry her secretly. Her brother, who was present, insisted upon the marriage taking place at once. I discovered a few days afterward that the brother was one of a gang of desperate gamblers. Ever since that night my life has been a misery."

"Have you lived with her?" asked Nick.

"No; but she has continually blackmailed me upon threat of making public the marriage. Finally I confessed to my father, who was urging me to marry Miss Bland—to whom I have been engaged for nearly three years. He sent for her, and asked her to put in writing the terms upon which she would consent to a divorce."

"When did this happen, Mr. Rogers?"

"A few days ago."

"On the day before your father was murdered?"

"No; on the day preceding that she came to see him."

"Were you present at the interview?"

"Yes."

"Good! Now tell me exactly what occurred at that meeting."

"She said that she would consent to a divorce for fifty thousand dollars. Father agreed to pay that sum in exchange for the certificate of divorce, and to pay her expenses to California and allow her a certain amount to live there until the divorce was granted."

"Well, what then?"

"He asked her to put it in writing. She called the next evening, after Dr. Lord had left, and said she would not do it for less than one hundred thousand dollars.

"My father told her that this was impossible. He read for her his will, and explained that by conceding fifty thousand dollars he was robbing my sister and myself of a large part of our heritage."

"Did he read for her the clause connected with your sister losing her portion if she did not marry the doctor within six months?"

"Yes, sir—every word of it."

"What then?" asked Nick.

"She produced a written document, of which this is a copy."

Nick took the document and glanced it over. Turning to Rogers, he said:

"Do you know, sir, that this bond holds as good against your father's estate, upon the production of the certificate of divorce, as if he had lived."

"Yes, I do."

"But you don't seem to recognize that she can continue her blackmailing scheme all the same, without annulling this instrument. It is a clever document, Mr. Rogers—very clever. In fact, I do not believe the woman ever drew up such an instrument herself."

"Then what do you believe?"

"I cannot tell you just yet. But I want you to answer me one more question: Did you have any conversation with her after your father signed that bond?"

"Yes."

"What was it about?"

"I promised her twenty-five thousand dollars on my own account."

"Did she leave the house then?"

"Yes. I accompanied her to the railway station."

Nick looked puzzled.

"Had your father retired to his room before you left the house?" he asked.

"No. But he had gone before I returned."

"And you never saw him alive again?"

"No, sir."

"Who let you in when you got back from the railway station?"

"Jones."

"Have you perfect confidence in that colored man, Mr. Rogers?" asked Nick.

"Absolute. He has been with us for over ten years."

"Did he accompany the family to Florida last winter?"

"Yes."

Nick Carter became silent.

He seemed to be buried in deep thought.

At length he looked intently at Rogers and said:

"Have you anything more to say, Mr. Rogers?"

"Nothing that I can think of."

"Very well. I shall now bid you good-night. I shall call upon you again to-morrow, and remember, silence is a necessity."

"The funeral takes place to-morrow morning at ten o’clock, Mr. Carter, but I shall be home again about two."

"I shall call after that hour. Good-night, Mr. Rogers."

When he had got a little away from the house, Nick stopped and looked back.

"I wish the moon would come out," he muttered. "I should like to explore the road between here and the next railway station."

At that instant his sharp ears detected a soft footfall in the snow behind him.

He turned suddenly.

That movement undoubtedly saved his life.

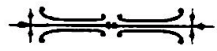
By the dim light that came from one of the windows of the house, he saw, outlined against the snow, the form of a man, who, with uplifted hand, was about to plunge a knife into his back.

In a second the would-be assassin found his wrist held by an iron grasp, and with a smothered cry of pain, the knife fell from his hand.

At the same moment the hall door was opened, and a flood of light rushed out upon the scene, revealing the features of Nick's assailant. Dr. Lord was coming out.

As Nick did not wish to see the doctor, or rather, as he did not wish to be seen by him, he flung the would-be assassin from him, picked up the knife and stepped into the shadow of the shrubbery. When the doctor had passed out of the lawn, Nick came from his hiding-place and went toward the nearest railway station, saying, as he walked:

"Another Cuban!"



CHAPTER IV.

IT WORKED LIKE A CHARM.

When he arrived at the Adams House, he found a telegram from Chick, which read:

"Alvarez at Spanish-American Hotel. Dining with the Cuban, Moreno. Shall endeavor to overhear conversation. If important, will report at Boston and put Patsy on the case here."

"Good!" said Nick. "The fellow who tried to knock me out must be one of Moreno's gang. I must warn Chick."

He forthwith sent the following cipher telegram:

"Telegram received. Moreno's gang have discovered I am on case. One of them made attempt on my life. Act cautiously, and come on if anything important.

Nick."

He handed this to the operator in the hotel corridor, and, feeling satisfied that nothing more could be done that night, he retired to his room.

Early in the morning he was awakened by a loud knocking at the door.

"A telegram for you, sir!" said a voice.

"Push it under the door!" cried Nick.

He tore open the dispatch and seemed to be completely mystified by the contents. It read:

"Rogers case. Watch Lord. Am writing. Important news.

Chick."

He dressed himself hurriedly, and immediately telegraphed to Chick:

"Received telegram. Come on at once. Put Patsy in charge.

Nick."

After breakfast he took the train to Dorchester.

It was now nine o’clock, and the funeral was to take place at ten.

He wandered up the road where Lord’s house was situated, and was just making up his mind to call when he saw a carriage stop at the gate.

"Too late," said Nick. "The fellow is just going up to Rogers’ place."

Nevertheless, he lolled about in the shadow of the trees.

In a few minutes Dr. Lord's door was opened, and Nick Carter saw a sight that surprised even him.

Walking down the garden path, apparently in earnest conversation, were the doctor and the Cuban who had attempted to assassinate him the night before. Dr. Lord got into the carriage; but the Cuban, taking off his hat respectfully, turned from the place and walked down the road, followed by Nick at a safe distance, who saw his man enter a street car bound toward Boston.

Nick hailed a cab near at hand.

He merely showed the driver his badge and said:

"Keep that car in sight; but do not pass it!"

"Trust me, sir," said the hackman, with a knowing wink.

When his fare stepped out of the cab, at the corner of Kneeland and Washington streets, the driver nearly lost his balance from the shock.

A lively-looking chap got into the cab in Dorchester, and a staid-looking clergyman paid him his fare in Washington street.

The Cuban had left the street car at the next block, and Nick hurried after him on foot.

The man entered the United States Hotel, and immediately went to the office.

Nick Carter was close at his elbow.

"Any letters or telegrams for Gonzales?" inquired the Cuban.

"Yes, sir. One telegram," said the clerk, who handed it to him.

He tore open the envelope and began to read the dispatch.

Nick was watching him intently, although he was apparently studying a time-table.

The Cuban seemed to be puzzled about something in that telegram.

He looked around uneasily, still holding the message in his hand.

Finally his eyes rested on the clergyman, and he approached him.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, with a pronounced foreign accent. "I am a stranger. I have just received this telegram."

Here he handed the dispatch to Nick and added:

"What is the meaning of Bay State, Worcester?"

Nick Carter looked up from the telegram and replied, in a well-disguised voice:

"There is a hotel in Worcester called the Bay State; but this message tells you to ask somebody named Rogers about it."

The Cuban laughed and said:

"No, no! You no understand. But I thank you for explain hotel."

Whereupon he took the telegram from Nick, lifted his hat courteously, and disappeared in the direction of the bar.

The moment he was out of sight, Nick said to himself:

"That worked like a charm. The dispatch must have been from Moreno."

He immediately took off his disguise and ordered a cab.

"To police headquarters!" was his instruction to the driver.

When he arrived there, he asked to see the chief.

"Why, Mr. Carter, how do you do?" cordially welcomed the head of Boston's police.

"I want you to do me a favor," said Nick.

"Certainly, my dear sir. Got some important case on, I'll wager."

"Yes," mildly returned Nick. "It is a very mysterious case. I want you to arrest a Cuban named Gonzales, and hold him without examination for me. If you do this secretly you will oblige me, as his detention may be of much importance."

"With pleasure," said the chief, as he touched a bell.

An officer answered instantly.

"Send Waldo here at once."

"Yes, sir.

"Waldo," said the chief, when the detective entered, "go with this gentleman and arrest the party he will point out. Ask no questions, and bring your prisoner. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

At the United States Hotel, Waldo, who spoke Spanish fluently, asked for Gonzales.

He was in his room.

Waldo ascended to the Cuban's apartment, and returned in about ten minutes with his prisoner. Nobody in the hotel corridor imagined for a moment that an arrest had been made, so friendly did the pair seem to be.

Only one person understood the situation.

That was Nick, who anxiously watched them from the paper stand, fearful that the Cuban might make a break for liberty.

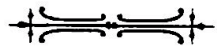
But Waldo knew his business too well.

He hailed a cab, ordered Gonzales to get in, and, having taken a seat opposite his prisoner, he directed the cabman to drive to police headquarters.

When they had gone, Nick consulted his watch.

It was half-past one.

"Now for young Rogers!" he cried.



CHAPTER V.

A TERRIBLE POISON.

Mr. Rogers," said Nick, when he was alone with that young gentleman, "can you come with me for about two hours?"

"Now?"

"Yes; at once."

"Where are you going?" asked the young man.

"To police headquarters."

"Police headquarters?" exclaimed Rogers, in dismay. "What on earth do you want me to go there for, Mr. Carter. You surely have not placed this matter in the hands of the police?"

"No, sir. The suspicion or fact that your father has been murdered is unknown to a single soul, outside you and me."

"But won't my going to police headquarters attract attention?"

"I have arranged that no one shall know of your visit. If it was not of great importance, I should not ask you to leave the house at such a time."

"Very well, sir," said Rogers. "Let us go at once, as my uncle will be back at five o'clock for dinner. He goes away by the six-thirty train."

"Where is he now?" asked Nick.

"With the lawyer, in Boston. My father left him sole executor."

When they arrived at police headquarters, they were met by the chief, who ushered them into his private room.

"We wish to see the prisoner without being observed by him," said Nick. "Use the screen."

"All right," said the chief.

He requested his visitors to stand behind a large screen, in which there were several small holes.

A few minutes afterward Gonzales appeared, accompanied by Waldo. Nick now directed Rogers to look through one of the holes in the screen.

The young man did so, and immediately drew back with a visible shudder. He seemed to be extremely agitated upon recognizing the Cuban, and was about to say something to Nick, when that gentleman put his finger to his lips and signaled him to be silent.

At that moment the chief said to the prisoner:

"What is your name?"

"Manuel Gonzales."

"Write your name in this book."

This was in compliance with a request which Nick had made.

When the prisoner had been removed, Rogers turned quickly to Nick Carter and exclaimed:

"That was her brother. His name is Alvarez, not Gonzales."

"When did you see this man last?" asked Nick, when they got outside.

"Last winter. At Tampa, Florida."

"Are you quite certain you have not seen him since then?"

"Absolutely certain. But how on earth did you get hold of him, and for what?"

"You will know that later, Mr. Rogers."

They were now driving rapidly toward Dorchester, and Nick decided to discontinue his investigations until he was safely closeted with his companion in the latter's home.

Having arrived there, Nick asked him abruptly:

"Was Dr. Lord at Tampa with you last winter?"

"Yes."

"Did he also meet this fellow Alvarez?"

"I am not certain; but I think he must have seen him, as he and I frequently went to the gambling rooms where Alvarez did business."

"Tell me," said Nick. "Would it not be to your interest if your sister did not marry Dr. Lord?"

This sudden question confused young Rogers.

"I do not know what you mean, Mr. Carter," he faltered.

"I will put it plainer. Do you wish your sister to marry Dr. Lord?"

"I do."

"Now, Mr. Rogers, I want you to answer me truthfully: Are you afraid of your wife?"

"I do not understand."

"Come, sir, are you not afraid that the price of her secrecy about your marriage will be a perpetual blackmail?"

The young man became very nervous; but he answered:

"Yes; I do fear that she will continue to blackmail me."

"For that reason," said Nick, "would you not like to have the one hundred and thirty thousand dollars which your sister would lose if she did not marry Dr. Lord?"

"I assure you, Mr. Carter, that, no matter what that woman—my wife—wishes, I sincerely hope to see my sister married to the doctor."

Nick noticed that he put particular emphasis upon the words, "no matter what that woman wishes," and he did not ask the young man another question.

Ten minutes later he rang the bell at Dr. Lord’s door and was admitted.

"Well, sir," said the doctor, who was visibly displeased when he saw Nick, "I thought I told you yesterday that I had no surgical instruments that wanted repairing."

"So you did, doctor; but I have made a discovery that may interest you."

"What is it?" asked the doctor. "I am in a hurry, for I have to visit a patient."

"It is this," said Nick, producing the hypodermic syringe case.

The doctor became interested.

"Oh, you have discovered something about that, have you?"

"Yes, doctor."

"Have you found the owner?"

"No," said Nick, intently watching his listener’s face. "I have not discovered the owner; but I have found the point that was broken off."

"Let me see it," said the doctor.

Nick handed it to him.

"Yes," said the medical man; "this is certainly the missing point. Where did you find it?"

"Ah, that’s a secret, doctor. But I believe you know the person to whom it belongs."

"Absurd! If I did, I should not have given it to you."

"It was well you did," said Nick, "or we might never have been able to locate where this point came from."

"It makes very little difference one way or the other," said the doctor, who was now beginning to feel bored.

"Don’t you remember," said Nick, "that I said it was of Spanish make?"

"Well, what of that?"

"Had you not a Spanish visitor the day before yesterday?"

The doctor started.

"What do you mean?" he cried.

"I was thinking that perhaps he might have left it behind. And if you gave me his address, doctor, I would call upon him and offer to mend it."

Dr. Lord laughed and said:

"Yes, I had a Spanish visitor the day before yesterday. But it wasn’t a man. It was a lady."

"I found a new kind of fluid in this little syringe, doctor," said Nick, adroitly changing the subject.

"Indeed?"

"Yes. You know that people who understand surgical instruments usually go in for a little chemistry, too. When I examined the cylinder of this syringe I noticed a small

quantity of colorless liquid in it; so I took it out and analyzed it."

The doctor was now becoming interested again, and Nick continued:

"I found it was a terrible poison."

"What?" cried Dr. Lord.

"Yes, doctor. That little syringe contained enough poison to kill a dozen men."

"You astonish me!" said the doctor.

"I have a little vial of the same drug here," said Nick, producing the one which he had picked up in the snow.

Dr. Lord took it in his hand and examined it curiously.

"You are certain that this is the same fluid?" he said, looking inquiringly at Nick.

"Absolutely certain, doctor. And it strikes me that it is a rather dangerous one to give a hypodermic injection with."

"You forget," said the doctor, "that all drugs are greatly diluted before being used for injection purposes."

"That is true," said Nick, apologetically.

"However," said Dr. Lord, "I shall consider it a favor if you will allow me to examine this. I have never seen anything like it before."

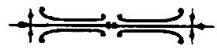
"You may do so," said Nick, and he continued: "Perhaps you would like to know where I discovered the point of the syringe?"

"Yes. Where did you find it?"

"In a dead man’s wrist!"

"What?" cried the doctor.

"It is as I have said," calmly rejoined Nick. "And now, doctor, I shall not detain you any longer from your patient. I shall call for the vial to-morrow."



CHAPTER VI.

"CAN HE SUSPECT?"

When Nick Carter reached the Adams House, it was just six o'clock.

A tall, clerical-looking man met him in the hallway.

It was Chick, Nick's assistant.

"Well, Chick," said Nick, when they were seated in his room, "what's the news?"

"The woman who claims to be Mrs. Rogers is already married to Moreno."

"His wife?"

"Yes."

"Did you learn their game?"

"Yes. Blackmail."

"I know that; but what else?"

"I dined at the next table to theirs last night, and learned that they have some deep scheme to prevent a man named Lord from getting married. Her brother was to have seen him this morning. That was why I sent the second telegram."

"Yes, yes. Go ahead," cried Nick.

"I think young Rogers is in the deal."

"No, he isn't," said Nick. "Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Good, Chick!"

At that moment there was a knock at the door and a bell-boy handed in a telegram.

It was from Patsy, and read:

"Alvarez woman and Moreno started for Boston on four-thirty train.

"Patsy."

"Moreno, too! That's good."

Then addressing Chick, Nick said:

"You meet Moreno at the railroad depot. I have to go to Worcester by the six-forty train. And see here. If anything serious turns up, telegraph to me at the Bay State Hotel."

It was just nine o'clock when the Boston train rolled into Worcester station.

The ground was still covered with snow from the storm of a few days before; but it had been freezing hard, and now a heavy crust made walking rather pleasant.

Nick stood outside the depot for a moment, and looked at the sky and the snow-covered road, as if considering whether he would walk to the hotel or ride. While he was thus engaged, he heard the rumbling of an incoming train.

"This is the New York express," said he, and he immediately withdrew into the shadow of the ticket office and watched the passengers as they came out.

There was the usual bustle and hurrying hither and thither that accompanies the arrival of a passenger train.

Thirty or forty persons came from the platform, grip or satchel in hand, and went out into the street, and finally there passed close to Nick the two individuals he most desired to see.

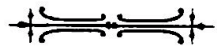
They were Anita and Moreno.

The latter was apparently giving her some very serious instructions.

But the gateman shouted:

"All aboard for Boston!"

Moreno hastily wrung Anita’s hand and rushed back to the train, and the lady gathered up her dress and went to the depot entrance.



Nick watched her board a cab and heard her order the driver to take her to the Bay State Hotel.

He followed leisurely on foot.

Having arrived at the hotel, he nodded to the clerk at the desk and asked to see the register.

"I want to see a lady who was to have arrived from New York to-day."

There were two recent signatures on the book.

One was in a delicate feminine hand, and read:

"Mrs. Rogers, New York."

The other was also in a woman’s writing.

It was:

"A. Lord, Boston."

It was now evident that the "ask Rogers" in the Gonzales telegram meant, ask for Rogers.

The second entry was rather strange; but it did not puzzle Nick Carter. Addressing the clerk, he said:

"Can I see Mrs. Rogers?"

"Are you her brother, sir—Mr. Lord, for whom she registered?" asked the clerk.

"Yes," replied Nick.

"Her room is number 46; yours is 47, sir—right opposite."

"Thank you," said Nick.

The bell-boy led the way to room 47, and Nick immediately took possession and bolted the door on the inside.

"Now for it!" he exclaimed as he removed his hat and overcoat.

A few moments afterward there was a rap at the door.

He at once drew the bolt.

The door opened, and Anita Alvarez entered.

"I beg your pardon," she said, in perfect English. "That stupid clerk must have made a mistake!"

She was about to retreat immediately, but Nick stepped between her and the door, and said:

"I assure you, madame, the clerk made no mistake. Mr. Gonzales was unable to meet you here tonight. I have come from him——"

"Let me pass!" interrupted the woman, with an imperious gesture.

"You really must excuse me, madame!" said Nick, courteously. "I am Sam Rogers' friend——"

"I do not understand you, sir," said Anita, whose color had heightened at the mention of young Rogers' name.

"Pray be seated, and I shall explain myself," said Nick, in his most gracious manner.

"I must insist upon your allowing me to leave this room instantly!"

She looked very beautiful at that moment, and Nick said to himself:

"It is no wonder young Rogers fell in love with her."

"Why do you detain me?" she cried, with increasing anger.

"I beg of you to keep calm," said Nick. "I have come as a messenger from your brother and Mr. Rogers."

"How am I to know this?"

"You must surely know, madame, that unless Gonzales told me where to meet you and had instructed me to assume the role of your brother, I would not be here."

This seemed so reasonable that she consented to be seated.

She then asked:

"Why did not my brother come himself?"

"He had to keep an eye upon the movements of Nick Carter, the New York detective."

That reply gave her confidence, and she said:

"Mr.—— eh. You haven't given me your name."

"Rogers, madame. I am Sam's cousin," coolly replied Nick.

"Oh, I suppose you came over from Philadelphia for the funeral."

"Precisely, madame. Sam has confided everything to me."

"He made an awful mistake in sending for that man, Nick Carter," said Anita.

"I don't agree with you."

"You don't know him, Mr. Rogers. That man will be sure to ferret out the truth. What I told Sam to do was to engage an ordinary detective, and if he did that, suspicion would most surely fall upon Dr. Lord. However, Moreno and Manuel will probably be able to arrange matters."

Nick was becoming enlightened.

"I don't think the doctor is out of the woods yet," said he.

"If he does get out, it is Sam's own fault," said the lady, "and I will never allow him to marry Miss Bland."

"He did what he considered was for the best."

"Oh, he is too weak. But tell me what news you have from my brother?"

"Sam refuses to see him."

"I know it. That is why Moreno has gone to Boston."

"I don't believe my cousin will have dealings with Mr. Moreno."

"If he does not, I shall at once go there and announce myself as his wife."

"If you do this, he will take steps to secure a divorce. Public sentiment would now be upon his side, and you would probably lose all."

"Ah! This is that Nick Carter's work."

She became thoughtful for a moment and then cried:

"How stupid of Manuel to have bungled last night!"

"I do not understand you," said Nick, who, nevertheless, now discovered that the attack upon his life was planned by Moreno and the woman.

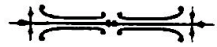
"I do not wish you to understand," said Anita, testily. "But you can tell Sam Rogers that, unless he agrees to my proposition, he will never marry Miss Bland."

"He has deputed me to act for him, madame, and if you will tell me your final proposal, I shall be able to say directly whether or not he will accept it."

"I shall not alter my proposition in the slightest. I must have one hundred thousand dollars in cash. He cannot pay this unless the match between his sister and Dr. Lord is broken off, and the only possible way to break it off is to accuse the doctor of the murder of old Mr. Rogers."

"But the doctor might be acquitted!" interjected Nick.

"I don't think so. Why, even Nick Carter, the detective, will have to swear that he found the point of the hypodermic syringe in Mr. Rogers' wrist, and the broken syringe in the doctor's room. That would convict him in any court. Besides,



it is very unlikely that Miss Rogers would marry a man about whom there was even a suspicion of having murdered her father. However, you now know the only conditions upon which I will get a divorce, and unless Sam consents at once, in writing, I will proclaim myself his wife and will go to police headquarters and tell them about the poison that was injected into Mr. Rogers wrist."

"Sam loves his sister," said Nick.

"I know he does," interrupted Anita. "But if he loves himself or Miss Bland, who, you know, is worth half a million, he will be a man and do what I demand. He can give his sister the money she will lose by not marrying Lord out of Miss Bland's fortune."

"I am afraid he will not comply with your demand," said Nick.

"Has he any proposition to make?"

"Yes. He will guarantee to pay you the one hundred thousand dollars after you procure the divorce, and he is married to Miss Bland."

"Does he think I am a fool?" she cried, angrily. "But I know this is not his doing. He has confided in Nick Carter. It is that wretch who is advising him. It is well he does not know the entire truth."

"What do you mean, madame? Sam assured me that he knew everything about his father's death."

"No, he does not. I am annoyed, Mr. Rogers. However, I have no more to say."

She paused for a few moments, and then, as if her whole being was inflamed with ferocity, she cried:

"Oh, if Manuel had only succeeded, I could force him to do my bidding!"

"Of course you refer to the fact that Sam would not see your brother", said Nick innocently.

"Yes."

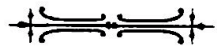
As she uttered that word, she looked in a fright at Nick, and the thought flashed across her mind:

"Can he suspect what I mean?"

Nick’s features were perfectly impassive, however, and addressing him, she said:

"I have no more to say. You can give my ultimatum to your cousin."

"Very well, madame. After I have seen Sam, I shall communicate the result to Gonzales."



CHAPTER VII.

DR. LORD ASTOUNDED.

That the mystery connected with Mr. Rogers' death was not known by the son, Nick was now convinced.

His visit to Worcester had been very fruitful, however, and the great detective returned to Boston armed with facts that he knew would soon enable him to unravel that mystery.

From Anita's passionate exclamations about himself, he learned that the Moreno gang would endeavor to get him out of the way, and he smiled grimly as he said to himself:

"They have a big contract on their hands."

A few minutes later he rang the bell at Dr. Lord's door and handed the domestic one of his cards containing his real name and profession.

When the doctor made his appearance and saw Nick, he said:

"You have come early for your vial. But I must ask you to wait some little time, as a gentleman from New York has just called."

"Nick Carter?" interjected Nick.

The doctor started.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

Nick arose from his seat, took another card from his pocket, and, handing it to his bewildered companion, said:

"I am Nick Carter."

"You!" exclaimed the doctor, who dropped into an arm-chair and looked at his visitor with astonishment. "Why, Mr. Carter, you are just the man I wanted to see. I was about to telegraph for you. I am in serious trouble."

"I dare say it is about the Rogers murder case," said Nick.

The doctor was again astounded.

When he recovered his equanimity, he said:

"And the surgical instrument maker scheme—what was the meaning of that, Mr. Carter?"

"I cannot explain to you, sir, why I adopt certain methods which I find necessary to employ in the business of my profession. It will, however, answer your question sufficiently to inform you that my adoption of the role of surgical instrument maker was connected with this same case concerning which you telegraphed for me. And now, sir, will you be good enough to state your business?"

"You seem to have divined it already."

"Then you do not require my services?"

"You have so surprised me, Mr. Carter, that I scarcely know what to say."

Nick was watching him narrowly.

"Shall I tell you what you want me for?" he asked.

"It would not surprise me one bit if you could. But, Mr. Carter, let me ask you one question: What do you know about the woman Alvarez?"

"Everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, doctor. And now will you tell me what you know about her?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Perhaps I had better explain," said the doctor. "On the morning after Mr. Rogers' death—some time after Dr. White and I had made our examination of the body, the woman Alvarez called. She insisted that she was Sam Rogers' wife."

"Yes, they were married," interrupted Nick.

"Really?"

"Yes. But go on."

"She appeared to be terribly excited. She said she had evidence that her father-in-law did not die of heart disease. I assured her that she was mistaken. Whereupon she took from

her pocket a little vial similar to the one which I asked you to allow me to examine yesterday."

Nick was all attention.

The fruit was ripening fast, and he firmly believed that it would very soon be ready to pluck.

"I analyzed the contents," continued the doctor. "I discovered that it was indeed a terrible poison."

"What did the woman say when she showed you the vial?" asked Nick.

"She became very excited again, and said:

"'I found this in my father-in-law's room. You have poisoned him! I will have you arrested!'

"I was fearful of scandal, for I am to be married to Mr. Rogers' daughter, so I tried to calm her. I said I would do anything to hush up the ridiculous suspicion."

"Ah!" sighed Nick, and the doctor continued:

"When I said that she screamed:

"'You are guilty, or you would not make such a proposition. But I have here the proofs of your villainous crime to get hold of Miss Rogers' money at once.'

"This annoyed me, and I requested her to leave the house at once, which she did. She returned again, however, that same evening. The moment I saw her the idea entered my mind that she came to blackmail me, and I determined to humor her—to

find out, if possible, who she was. She came fully prepared this time. She said that a private examination had been made by young Rogers and it was discovered that his father had been poisoned. There was an appearance of truth in this; for, after her first visit, I wanted to make a more critical examination of the body, and Sam refused to allow it. You see, Mr. Carter, I was in a very delicate position."

"I should say so!" said Nick.

"Therefore," added Dr. Lord, "I listened to her without offering a word of denial or assent. Her plans were very cleverly laid, you see. She said that if I would consent to sign a certain agreement, she would bind herself not to disclose the fact about the vial or any of the other evidence, which she said she had in her possession, that directly pointed to me as Mr. Rogers' murderer. I asked time to consider, though I had not the slightest intention of permitting her to blackmail me. She consented, and gave me until yesterday morning, when, she said, her brother would call."

"And he did call?"

"Yes."

"I know it. I saw him."

Dr. Lord really felt uncomfortable. He could not understand why or how Nick knew so much about the affair, unless it was that he was watching him. However, he continued:

"He brought with him the copy of an agreement. I told him that I could not decide just then, but that, in any event, I

would not sign the agreement as it then stood. I wanted to see just how far he would go."

"Bravo!" interrupted Nick. "Did he leave a copy of the document with you?"

"No. I was just starting for Mr. Rogers' funeral, and he promised to come for my answer at ten o'clock to-day."

"He won't be here," said Nick. "But I have heard enough, doctor. What do you wish me to do?"

"I want to be protected from this gang of blackmailers, but I do not want it made public."

"If young Rogers knows of it, it will be hard to hide the affair," said Nick. "I shouldn't be surprised if he did, if that woman is his wife."

Dr. Lord looked the picture of misery.

He got up from his chair and walked up and down the room two or three times.

He then stopped suddenly before Nick Carter and cried:

"For God's sake, do something—anything to prevent this outrageous lie reaching Miss Rogers' ears! Let them take the money. Yes, I will add to it; but spare me my honor and my love."

He sat down, grief-stricken and miserable.

And then Nick went to him and extending his hand, he said:

"Brace up, doctor. You have nothing to fear, nor need you feel even worried."

The doctor took Nick's hand in his and expressed his warmest thanks.

He was pouring out his gratitude, when Nick interrupted him by saying:

"Do you remember the terms of the agreement they wished you to sign, doctor?"

"Yes. It stipulated that upon condition that the Alvarez woman or her brother would not breathe a suspicion about the finding of the hypodermic syringe point, I was to pay to her the sum of fifty thousand dollars on the morning of my marriage with Miss Rogers. I need not tell you that signing such a document would incriminate me and give them a perpetual handle for blackmail."

"You only know one-half of their scheming, doctor. But they are clever. They wished to make certain of at least one person from whom they could levy tax. However, the question of Mr. Rogers death must be sifted to the end, and if young Rogers is in any way implicated, I may need your assistance."

"You shall have it if it is necessary. But it strikes me, Mr. Carter, that the first thing to be ascertained is, was Mr. Rogers murdered?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A CRUEL POSITION.

I shall settle that question," said Nick. "It was I who found the point of the hypodermic syringe imbedded in Mr. Rogers' wrist. It was undoubtedly broken off to complete the blackmailing scheme and attract suspicion to you. It was for that same reason the broken syringe was left here."

"That must be so," said the doctor, "and if he was murdered, it must have been by that woman."

"In my profession we do not jump at conclusions so hastily," said Nick, evading the doctor's remark.

Dr. Lord laughed at this sally, and Nick took up his hat as if about to leave.

"Before you go, Mr. Carter, can you tell me what was the appearance of the wrist in the locality where the syringe point was imbedded?"

"Yes. I observed it very carefully. Where the point lay, underneath the skin, the color was normal—except that one

could detect the needle-like piece of silver, upon very close observation. But it was not that which first attracted my attention."

"What was it?" asked the doctor, who seemed to be intensely interested.

"It was the fact that, extending from the point of the needle upward, for a couple of inches, there was a marked discoloration."

"Thank you. This may be important, Mr. Carter. I shall consult with Dr. White about it."

Nick then bade the doctor good-by and turned his footsteps toward the Rogers mansion.

He had not gone many yards when he met his faithful assistant, Chick.

"Moreno is up at Rogers' place," said Chick, "and Ida is at the hotel."

"Well, what other news, Chick?"

"Miss Rogers loves the doctor."

"Good! Keep an eye on Rogers and Moreno for a few minutes."

Nick immediately returned to Dr. Lord's house.

He hurriedly explained to the doctor why he had come back, and, two minutes later, a distinguished-looking Cuban left the physician's residence.

He walked leisurely in the direction of the Rogers mansion.

Chick, who was accustomed to his chief's wonderful disguises, noticed him approaching and came slowly toward him.

"As soon as I have entered the house I engage Jones, the butler, in conversation," said Nick, hurriedly.

He then entered the lawn of the Rogers villa and approached the front door.

"Can I see Mr. Rogers?" he asked, when Jones answered the bell.

"He is engaged just now, sir. But if you will give me your card——"

"Oh, never mind," interrupted Nick. "I shall wait for him."

The colored man showed him into the reception-room.

At that moment the door bell rang again.

It was Chick, and Nick Carter knew well that his clever assistant would keep Jones engaged until he again appeared.

Creeping noiselessly, he went along the hallway until he arrived at the library door.

Here he stopped and listened.

He heard the voices of two persons; but could not catch their conversation.

The ornamentations on the key-hole, inside as well as on the hall side, prevented his hearing through that channel.

Looking upward, he noticed that the old-fashioned transom could easily be opened, and he was soon standing upon a hall chair with a good view of the interior of the room.

Sam Rogers was seated at a desk, and Moreno standing beside him.

The latter was speaking in a commanding manner; but his voice was so low that Nick could not detect his words.

He now proceeded to open the transom as cautiously and noiselessly as possible.

After a few moments he succeeded in opening it a few inches, and he then heard distinctly the conversation of Moreno and Rogers.

"It is utterly useless to go any further," said Rogers. "I will not swear an information against Dr. Lord."

"Was it Nick Carter advised you to make this decision?"

"No, sir. Mr. Carter does not know anything about this affair."

"Why did you engage him?"

"Anita told me to engage a detective."

"She told you to engage a private detective in Boston, to whom you were to point out the top of the hypodermic syringe, and suggest to him that it might belong to Dr. Lord. If you did that, Lord would have been at once arrested on

suspicion. But you knew that Nick Carter would never make the arrest until he had fully and perfectly investigated the case, and was absolutely certain of his man."

"I know that now. I did not know it when I engaged him."

"If you engaged him with the intention of directing his suspicion to Dr. Lord, why do you now refuse to make an information yourself?"

"Because I know Dr. Lord did not murder my father."

"What would you do if Anita made such a statement to the police?" said the Cuban.

The young man started at this cold-blooded suggestion.

He seemed to be in a perfect agony of mental torture.

Suddenly he stood up, and, facing Moreno, he said:

"If she dares to do such a thing, I would expose the whole affair."

"Have a care, Mr. Rogers," said the Cuban, fiercely. "Don’t go too far."

"I defy both you and her!" cried Rogers, who was now very excited.

It evidently did not suit Moreno’s plans to quarrel seriously with his companion.

He immediately changed his tactics and said:

"If Anita gave you a release to-morrow, how much would you pay for it?"

"To-morrow? Why, that's impossible! But, see here, Moreno. If Mr. Carter arrests the doctor upon his own responsibility, I shall not interfere. That is all I can or will do in this direction. But I am willing to guarantee Anita one hundred thousand dollars, to be paid after my marriage with Miss Bland, if she produces a decree of divorce before it. It is utterly useless to annoy me further."

"We will force you to do this!" hissed Moreno.

"Do your very worst! I am so weary of this disgraceful affair that I am perfectly prepared for any event."

"Very well, Mr. Rogers," said the Cuban, in a cold, cutting tone. "Anita will to-morrow come to Boston and proclaim herself your wife."

That shot told.

The young fellow threw himself into a chair and gave way to torturing reflections.

His position was indeed cruel.

Moreno knew well the effect of his blow, he looked at Rogers with a smile of triumph, and then took up his hat and pretended to prepare to leave the room.

He took a few steps toward the door, when Rogers suddenly cried:

"Stop!"

"Well, sir?" said Moreno, smiling grimly.

"Give me one week to consider."

"No, Mr. Rogers, not one day. You wish to consult with Nick Carter. I must have your answer now or you will never marry Miss Bland. If you are so anxious to avoid family scandal by saving your sister's intended husband, pay the money right away. It will enable you to wed half a million."

The young fellow struggled desperately between his honor and his feelings.

"Supposing I do consent," he said, at length. "You have agreed to produce a divorce from Anita upon receipt of one hundred thousand dollars. That will take some time."

"She is prepared to release you legally at once."

"At once?"

"Yes. If you consent to pay the money to-morrow, I shall telegraph to her to come here to arrange the affair. And now I shall not waste another moment. Do you consent? Or shall I allow her to come here and proclaim herself your wife?"

"I consent," said Rogers, in a solemn tone, as if he was passing his own death sentence. "Leave me now, Moreno. I am upset by this affair. I shall be ready to-morrow."

"Oh, no," said the Cuban, with a sardonic grin. "I shall not leave you now until our little business is transacted."

"Mr. Carter will be here shortly," said Rogers, looking the Cuban full in the face. "Perhaps you would not care to see him?"

"Oh, it does not make any difference, now that you have decided to settle up without waiting for Dr. Lord's arrest. But I would advise you to dismiss Carter at once."

"Very well. I shall be glad to have this horrible affair ended. But——"

He mused for a moment, and then continued:

"Mr. Carter has already interested himself in the case, and from what you tell me of his character, I fear he may want to probe it, with or without my consent."

"Ah!" said Moreno, "I did not think of that. Yes. He must be silenced."

"What do you mean?"

"Never mind, Mr. Rogers. We will attend to that."

As he said this, the door suddenly opened, and Nick Carter entered.

"You will attend to Nick Carter, will you?" said he.

Quick as lightning, and before Moreno could recover from his surprise, Nick caught his wrists with a grasp of iron and placed the handcuffs upon them.

"Now, Mr. Moreno," said he, "Nick Carter will attend to you. Come along!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Cuban. "Where did you come from?"

"The moon, of course, but the place you are going to will be much nearer at hand."

Nick caught him by the arm and marched him out of the room.

Handing him over to Chick who was still conversing with the colored man, Nick said:

"Take this fellow to police headquarters."

He then turned to young Rogers.

The young man was bewildered from astonishment.

He was positively dazed to learn that Nick knew about his arrangements with Moreno.

He could not understand how it was possible for him to have discovered it, and he looked at him in silence in the same manner as he would have looked at a supernatural being.

Nick saw that the young fellow was overwhelmed with surprise; but there was no time to be lost.

"Mr. Rogers," said he, "I want your presence at the Adams House at three o’clock. It is a matter of the greatest importance for you to be there. Don’t fail."

Surprises were pouring in so suddenly upon the young man that he was too bewildered to reply.

Nick took no notice of his amazement or silence. He repeated:

"Don’t forget. Adams House, at three o’clock."

He left Rogers seated in his library, still wondering how the affair happened.

Nick now hastened to the nearest telegraph office and sent the following dispatch:

"Mrs. Rogers, Bay State Hotel, Worcester: Manuel has seen Sam’s cousin. Settlement impossible unless with you, in person. Come on by first train. Meet me at Adams House. Ask for Rogers, room 75.

Moreno."

Five minutes later he was at Dr. Lord’s.

"Well, Mr. Carter," said the physician, "what can I do for you this time?"

"I simply called to ask you to meet me in room seventy-five at the Adams House at three o’clock."

"I shall be there, Mr. Carter."

Nick did not delay one moment, but hastened to his hotel.

Here he lay upon a lounge and gave himself up to a moment of reflection.

"What a sell they will all get!" he mused. "But it will be an agreeable one. The poor doctor will be sold because his misery will end almost before it had begun.

"And young Rogers!

"Ah! He is a weak subject, and no mistake.

"If he hadn’t deceived me about the woman’s visits, I could have finished yesterday.

"However, he will feel sold when he learns how I have found him out, although he will, at the same time, be freed from his Cuban wife.

"As for the three Cubans!

"Well, perhaps the greatest surprise of all will be for them!"

CHAPTER IX.

LAST LINK IN THE CHAIN.

At two o’clock precisely a lady knocked at the door of room 75, Adams House.

It was Anita Alvarez.

Nick Carter, alias Mr. Rogers, admitted her.

"How do you do, madame?" said Nick.

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Rogers. I expected to find my brother, and—and a friend here."

"They will be here presently."

"My brother tells me that Sam will not accept the terms of the agreement."

"He will be here himself at three o’clock, madame. We shall then arrange everything connected with this matter."

"But cannot you tell me in the meantime what it is he particularly objects to?"

"I cannot see what good it would do. It will be much better to discuss the entire affair with him personally. But won't you remove your heavy cloak and make yourself comfortable while you are waiting? By the way, wouldn't you like a cup of coffee after your journey?"

"Yes, Mr. Rogers, thank you. If you would not mind, I should like a cup of black coffee and brandy."

Nick touched a bell.

It was answered by Chick, to whom Nick passed a note, saying, as he did so:

"Will you please bring some coffee and brandy at once?"

"Yes, sir."

The note contained the following message:

"Have Moreno and Gonzales here at 3:30. Admit Rogers first. Keep prisoners in your room until we need them."

Chick's room was number 73, and had a door leading into Nick's.

When the door closed, Nick took from his pocket the hat pin which he found in Mr. Rogers' room, and placed it on a chair close to his visitor.

"Does that pin belong to you, madame?" asked he.

She looked at it; then put her hand up to her hat to satisfy herself that the one there was not missing.

"Why, yes!" she cried. "I have missed that pin for some days. I wonder where it came from, or how it could have got here."

"It was found upon the bed with Mr. Rogers' dead body."

She trembled and became pale and confused.

But recovering herself, she asked:

"Where did you say it was found?"

"Where you dropped it, madame."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you not remember the morning after Mr. Rogers' death?"

"Yes."

"When you went to see the body with your husband?"

"No, sir. You are mistaken——"

"What?" said Nick. "Why, you told me that——"

"Oh, yes! I forgot."

The unfortunate woman was so bewildered that, in her confusion, she really believed she had told him.

"By the way, I hope you have the release for Sam ready," said Nick.

"Yes," said the woman, who was now feeling particularly uncomfortable.

But just then the waiter arrived with the coffee and brandy, and the diversion relieved her.

She little guessed how badly she needed a stimulant just then.

Nick looked at his watch.

It wanted but a few minutes of three o’clock.

"When did you see your husband last?" he asked, suddenly.

"Last night—eh, I mean—eh, not since his father’s death."

"There is one thing that Sam has concealed from me," said Nick.

"What is that?"

"Was his father really murdered by Dr. Lord? Or was it by somebody else?"

"You know well," said Anita, regaining her self-confidence, "that no other person could have done it."

"Then you believe," said Nick, adroitly, "that that syringe was charged with poison solely for the purpose of murdering Mr. Rogers."

"I know it."

The moment she uttered these words she recognized her mistake, and would have given worlds not to have spoken them.

But, although Nick had now secured the last link of his chain of evidence, he gave no outward sign that he attached any importance to it.

He was about to continue when someone knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said Nick.

Sam Rogers entered.

"Anita!" he cried, in amazement.

"At your service, sir!" coldly rejoined the lady.

"Be seated, Mr. Rogers," said Nick.

Anita looked at Nick nervously.

"That man would not call him Mr. Rogers, if he was his cousin!" was the thought that flashed through her mind.

Rogers was clearly as much mystified as was Anita.

But his perplexity was not mixed with fear.

She was trembling with fear of an unknown something which her imagination was unable to define.

She looked at Nick with an expression that mingled indignation and appeal.

Her suspense was really becoming unbearable, and Nick saw it.

"Better cut this act short," he muttered.

Turning to Rogers, he said:

"Mr. Rogers, that woman is not your wife."

"Liar!" thundered Anita.

"Keep your temper, madame," said Nick. "Your real husband will shortly be here. As Mrs. Moreno, you cannot be Mrs. Rogers."

"My God!" she cried. "How did you learn this? Who are you?"

Not heeding her question, Nick continued:

"I have learned much more, madame, that you will be even less pleased to listen to."

"Is this true?" asked Rogers, in a whirl of delighted amazement.

"Yes, Mr. Rogers. You may set your mind at rest on that point."

Just then the door opened, and Chick announced:

"Dr. Lord!"

The woman trembled from head to feet when she saw the doctor.

Rogers also felt very uncomfortable.

"Have the others arrived?" asked Nick.

"Yes, sir. They are in the next room."

"Is Waldo with them?"

"Yes, sir, and another man."

"Send them in guarded."

The door between Nick's room and his assistant's was immediately opened, and Moreno and Gonzales were marched in, handcuffed to the two detectives.

"Nick Carter!" cried both prisoners, simultaneously.

"Yes, gentlemen," said Nick. "I shall now explain why I have invited you all to be present at this meeting."

No one uttered a word.

Everybody was too much astonished.

But they were even more astounded when Nick said:

"Everybody in this room knows, in part, a good deal of what I know concerning Mr. Rogers' death, and the criminal events surrounding it; but not one of you can even guess all that I do know.

"In the first place, Mr. Rogers was not murdered.

"Three people in this room knew, from the very beginning, that he was not murdered.

"These are Anita Moreno, Manuel Alvarez and the conspirator in chief, Moreno himself."

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the room it could not have caused more consternation and amazement.

Nick then continued, in the same cool manner:

"There was an intention to murder him, however; but luckily nature stepped in and claimed Mr. Rogers before this crime could be committed.

"This intended murder was planned by Moreno and was to have been executed by the woman, his wife, who is guilty of bigamy for entering into a marriage ceremony with Mr. Rogers.

"The plan was to incriminate Dr. Lord, and thus create a lever for blackmail.

"When Anita Moreno went to Mr. Rogers' home—to murder him—and found that he had died the night before of heart disease, she nevertheless inserted the needle of this hypodermic syringe in his wrist and injected some of Mr. Moreno's famous poison into it."

Here he held aloft the syringe.

"She then broke off the point in the wound, hoping that the doctors would find it and naturally suspect the family physician of having used the dreadful poison it contained.

"But she was ignorant of the fact that after death hypodermic injections will not be distributed through the system, as the blood has ceased to circulate.

"For this reason I noticed that the wrist was discolored by the poison, and that fact has guided me throughout.

"She then visited Dr. Lord and left the broken syringe upon his bureau.

"There is no necessity to recite the clever scheme of blackmail which was to have been put into execution.

"Every one in this room knows the particulars.

"But every one here does not know, nor does the lady herself, that the vial of poison from which the syringe was charged was dropped by her at the Providence depot and picked up by me.

"And lastly, only the three prisoners know that Alvarez attempted to murder your humble servant at midnight on Mr. Rogers' lawn.

"And now what should we do with these criminals?

"Dr. Lord, you have the best right to dictate.

"What is your sentence?"

"Spare them," generously cried the doctor.

"Just what I expected you to say," said Nick.

"Yes, we will set them at liberty.

"But upon one condition.

"They must return to Cuba; for if within three days any one of them is found in the United States, every one of the crimes of which I hold the proofs against them will be charged to the law's limit."

When the three culprits took their departure, Nick Carter's face became once more severe, and, turning to Sam Rogers, he said:

"You should not have lied to me!"

That was all; and the great detective then escaped from the outpouring of gratitude of the two men, whose happy future he had insured.

THE END

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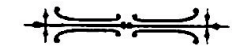

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